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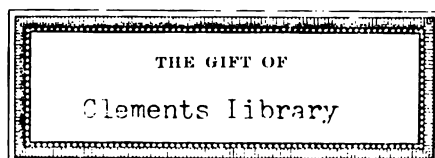
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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

BENEDICT ARNOLD
FIRST GOVERNOR
OF RHODE ISLAND

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE
NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BY
HAMILTON B. TOMPKINS

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Benedict Arnold, First Governor of Rhode Island

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY AUGUST 18th, 1919

By
HAMILTON B. TOMPKINS
Former President of the Society

Benedict Arnold, son of William Arnold, was born at or near Leamington, Warwickshire, on the 21st of December, 1615. William Arnold sailed with his family for this country from Dartmouth, May 1st, 1635, and arrived in New England on the 24th of June following.

He was for a time, says Staples, at Hingham, remaining less than a year, and, as his son Benedict records, was at Providence as early as April 20th, 1636, and was one of those with whom Roger Williams shared the land purchased from the Sachems Canonicus and Miantonomi. Benedict removed to Providence with his father and we find that on or about August 20th, 1637, he was one of the signers, with twelve others, to a compact promising conformity to all such orders or agreements as the majority shall establish, but "only in civil things." Although but a young man of hardly twenty-four, he seems to have attained prominence, and his name appears, together with that of Roger Williams, under date 3 mo. 9th day, 1637, as a witness to a memorandum confirming the grant of lands made by the Sachems

above named, to Williams, and extending the same "up the streams of the Pawtucket and Pawtuxet without limits for the use of their cattle." I may remark here that these signatures had always been considered genuine until 1896, when Mr. Sidney S. Rider of Providence, in a tract written and issued by him,* pronounced them to be forgeries, and he stated that he had seen a copy of a document filed in the Court at Newport, in the trial of a case there in 1679, in which it appeared that Benedict Arnold declared under oath that he did not sign the memorandum. Mr. George T. Paine, also of Providence, in a paper read before the Rhode Island Historical Society in November of the same year and afterwards printed,† denied Mr Rider's claim. and asserted that his bare statement should not be taken without a copy of the document or a quotation of the words employed by Arnold, both of which Mr. Rider had failed to give." The publication of the Rhode Island Historical Society, issued some years after the controversy, containing the William Harris papers,‡ gives the testimony taken at a session of the Court held in March, 1659, in which Benedict Arnold says, "ye name subscribed in ye paper where ye evidence of Providence is was not his handwriting." This statement of Arnold's was used by Randall Holden and John Greene in October, 1679, in behalf of the Warwick purchasers in a suit brought by William Harris for their lands.

In an interview with Mr. Rider a few years before his death, he told me that he had not seen the Harris papers themselves at the time he wrote, as he was denied access to them, and they were not at that time in the possession of the Rhode Island Historical Society, and it is fair to presume that Mr. Paine also had not seen them, or he would not have made the statement he did, impugning the assertion of Mr. Rider in the Harris suit above referred to.

*Rhode Island Historical Tracts. Second Series. The forgeries connected with the deed given by the Sachems Canonicus and Miantonomi to Roger Williams of the land on which the town of Providence was planted, by Sidney S. Rider, Providence, 1896.

†A denial of the charges of forgery in connection with the Sachems' deed to Roger Williams. By George T. Paine. A paper read before the Rhode Island Historical Society, November 17, 1896.

‡Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society. Vol. X. (Harris Papers), Providence, 1902.

Benedict Arnold was admitted as one of the purchasers of the lands at Providence and assigned one of the "home lots." On the 27th day of the fifth month, 1640, he signed an agreement, with thirty-eight besides himself, to form a more compact government, "necessary," as Staples says, "to preserve the peace and insure the prosperity of a growing community." "But the new system," as Staples adds, "gave rise to difficulties," especially after the arrival of Samuel Gorton in Providence. "Upon the attempt to enforce the execution of an award against Francis Weston made by eight men orderly chosen, Gorton, with many of his followers, assailed the representatives of law and order making a tumultuous hubbub," and some drops of blood were shed on both sides. In a petition, written by himself, setting forth the various facts in the matter, Benedict Arnold, with twelve other inhabitants of Providence on the 17th day of November, 1641, formally applied to Massachusetts, in which he says: "Out of gentle courtesy and for the preservation of humanity and mankind, to consider our condition and lend us a neighborlike helping hand and ease us of our burthen of them," referring to Gorton and his associates, but Massachusetts claimed that it had no right to interfere unless they were under its jurisdiction.

Benedict Arnold, with his father, Robert Cole and William Carpenter had, about this time, removed to Pawtuxet, where they had purchased land some four miles south of Providence but within the limits of that town; being dissatisfied with Gorton and some of his adherents, who had moved to their neighborhood, Arnold and the three others above named, on the 2nd of September, 1642, went to Boston and submitted themselves and their lands to the government and jurisdiction of Massachusetts. They were received by the General Court and appointed justices of the peace. By this act on the part of these settlers, a foreign jurisdiction was set up in the midst of the Providence government and was a source of great vexation until 1658, when the Pawtuxet people withdrew from Massachusetts and again acknowledged allegiance to Rhode Island.

Gorton and his company, dissatisfied at having Pawtuxet placed under the rule of Massachusetts, in January, 1643, left their lands and houses and removed twelve miles

southward to a place called Shawomet, which they had purchased from Miantonomi, beyond the limits of Massachusetts, and Pumham, the local Sachem, was also a party to the deed. In January, 1641, the Arnolds and their fellow-settlers, had purchased from Sacoconoco, the Sachem of Pawtuxet, the lands which they held, and were thus as far as this Sachem could give title to them, placed under the government of Massachusetts by the Act of submission of the Arnolds and Carpenter and Cole. After Gorton had purchased Shawomet and commenced his settlement, Pumham and Sacononoco came to Boston, accompanied by Benedict Arnold, as interpreter, and were brought by him into the presence of Governor Winthrop, who took them under the government of Massachusetts, upon their submitting themselves and their territory to his jurisdiction. The latest historian of early Rhode Island intimates that the object of the Arnolds in having these two local Sachems submit themselves to Massachusetts, "was because they intended to make further purchases of lands from them, and if their independency of Miantonomi could be established and the proprietary authority of Miantonomi were superseded by that of Massachusetts, it would cause the Arnolds, through their titles derived from the local Sachems, to become full owners of Pawtuxet and Shawomet, in a word, would make their fortunes." "Thus they thought of this simple plan," says Richman, "having brought Pawtuxet under the jurisdiction of the Bay by submitting their own persons and estates, why could they not also bring Shawomet under the same jurisdiction by getting Pumham to submit his person? Indeed," continues Richman, "from this scheme of the Arnolds, as a scheme, it is difficult to withhold admiration. It was to make each of the Arnolds rich, and also at the same time wreak the most exquisite vengeance upon their personal enemy, Gorton."

It was claimed that Pumham was independent of Miantonomi and was the owner of Shawomet lands, and that Miantonomi had no right to sell the territory mentioned and assigned to Gorton and his company, and Pumham asserted that he had signed the deed together with Miantonomi, under duress. The attempt of Massachusetts to extend its jurisdiction, under this claim, instigated, it is said, by the

Arnolds, the attack upon the Gortonists at Shawomet, their capture and trial at Boston, are familiar to all readers of Rhode Island history and it is not necessary to rehearse it here. "From the standpoint of the moment," continues the historian above quoted, "the strategy of the Arnolds had been completely successful. The overlordship of Miantonomi as to Shawomet and Pawtuxet had been superseded by that of Massachusetts, and the material fortunes of the conspirators seemed to have been made thereby." But neither of the parties, however, succeeded in gaining anything in the end and the action of Massachusetts has been designated by one of its own writers as "atrocious," and the Arnolds failed in occupying any portion of Shawomet. Gorton continued the fight for his grant, after his release, and subsequently went to England to lay the matter before the proper authorities. The General Court of Massachusetts, on the 16th of October, 1645, upon the petition of thirty-two persons, asking for the lands of Pumham, granted them ten thousand acres, and to take the houses of the Gortonists, provided they should pay the owners what the Court should appoint, "if they see cause so to do;" and Benedict Arnold was designated to negotiate with the Sachem for his right in any improved ground. No settlement, however, was made under this grant, as John Brown, a magistrate of Plymouth, and, at that time, one of the Commissioners of the United Colonies, prohibited the settlement, claiming the lands as within Plymouth jurisdiction, and saying it should be restored to its rightful owners, Gorton and his associates. On the 16th of May, 1646, the Commissioners for Foreign Affairs, of which the Earl of Warwick was the head, issued an order requiring Massachusetts to reinstate the proscribed parties and forbidding it to exercise jurisdiction over them. The purchasers returned to their homes and the settlement was named Warwick by Gorton in compliment to the Earl through whose influence his mission was successful. The controversy was prolonged for thirty-five years, but the efforts of Massachusetts to retain, or exert her unlawful authority were successfully withstood.

The action of the Arnolds in this whole matter is hardly to be commended, but perhaps much must be allowed for the unsettled condition of the country at the time and the

desire to obtain as much land as possible was but the natural instinct of the early Colonists, and however we may regard these unsavory proceedings of the Arnolds in the calmer and more enlightened view of the present time, yet it does not seem, even at that period, to have interfered with the usefulness of Benedict, or have had the effect of his losing the esteem of his fellow-freemen, or to have in any way hindered his later political preferment.

Benedict Arnold spoke the Indian language readily, even as well as Roger Williams, and these two are said to have been the only ones among the early settlers of this colony who attained any proficiency in that tongue, and Arnold was often called upon to act in negotiations with the natives.

In June, 1645, he was sent by the General Court of Massachusetts, as a messenger to the Narragansets to urge them to desist from war against the Mohegans; on the 28th of July following Arnold was again sent as one of the three messengers to require the hostile tribes to send deputies to Boston, who should explain the cause of the war, receive satisfaction and make peace. Their attempt, however, failed, and the embassy were haughtily received by the Narragansetts. A month later, messengers were appointed, including Arnold, to carry back a present which the Narragansetts had lately sent as a peace offering to the English; Arnold to act as interpreter; but he could not be found at Providence, and it is stated that he dared not venture again at that time among the Indians without a guard, as they charged him with having misrepresented their reply of two months previous, and Roger Williams went as interpreter in his stead.

At a meeting of the General Court of Rhode Island held at Warwick on the 22d of May, 1649, it was ordered that letters be sent to Benedict Arnold and his father and the rest of Pawtuxet in reference "to their subjecting themselves to this Colony." It will be noticed as an evidence of Benedict Arnold's prominence that his name is mentioned first in the order, rather than his father, and as an indication of his increasing wealth at the assessment of taxes in Providence in 1650, Benedict Arnold's amount was put at £5, the largest sum assessed against any one individual. In June of this

same year Roger Williams, in writing to Gov. Winthrop of Connecticut says, "Benedict Arnold having now bought house and land at Newport, proposing thither to remove." No reason has been assigned, as far as I have been able to discover, for his change of residence, but probably he thought that Newport with its commodious harbor and growing population would afford him a wider field for his mercantile pursuits. He writes: "We came from Providence with our family to dwell at Newport in Rhode Island the 19th day of November, Thursday afternoon, and arrived ye same night, year 1651." The Island at this time was under the administration of William Coddington, who had gone to England and had had himself appointed by the Council of State governor of the islands of Aquidneck and Conanicut for life. Providence, fearing that the Patent of 1644 had been vacated by the grant to Coddington, sent Williams to England to obtain a separate Charter for Providence and Warwick and those of this island who were opposed to Coddington appointed John Clarke with William Dyre as coadjutor and secretary, to go to London to have Coddington's commission annulled; in this they were successful, and in February, 1653, Dyre returned with letters from the Council that Coddington's commission had been revoked, and authorizing the government to proceed (as organized in 1647) under the Patent of 1644. On the 18th of March, 1653, Arnold was made the bearer of a letter from Newport to the mainland towns proposing that the next General Court of Elections, regularly to be holden in May as provided for in the Patent, should meet at Newport, but no joint meeting was held, and Providence and Warwick met at Providence and the Island towns at Newport on the 17th of May. Among other business transacted at this meeting in Newport, nine freemen were admitted and the name of Benedict Arnold heads the list. From this time on we find him prominent in the affairs of the Colony, and although he had not been formally released from his allegiance to Massachusetts, and but recently made a freeman, he was one of the six Commissioners appointed by the town, with an equal number from the other three towns, to draw up articles of agreement settling the terms of re-union of the four towns under the first patent, which had been superseded for a

time, as far as this Island was concerned, by the commission to Coddington. A Court of Commissioners was formed, consisting of six from each town, which, until the granting of the Charter of 1663, was the governing body of the Colony. At the General Court of Elections, held in Warwick on the 12th day of September, 1654, Arnold was elected an Assistant for Newport, and was re-elected a member of the Court almost continuously until 1661. His name appears as Moderator of the Court oftener than any of its members, not excepting Roger Williams, and we find him acting as Commissioner sometimes for Providence, Portsmouth, and in 1656, even for Warwick.

As one of the Court of Commissioners he was constantly active, and a member of the most important committees. In 1655 he was appointed by the Court, with Roger Williams, Samuel Gorton and Wm. Baulstone to ~~from~~ and subscribe the Letters of Thanksgiving to the Lord President of the Council and to Mr. John Clarke, praying the Lord President to present the humble acknowledgements and submission of the Colony to His Highness the Lord Protector, and the letter afterwards received from Cromwell, by the Colony, was ordered to be committed to the custody of Benedict Arnold. At the General Court of Elections held at Newport on the 19th day of May, 1657, Arnold was the Moderator of the Assembly, and was chosen President of the Colony, succeeding Roger Williams, to which position he was re-elected for the next three years. As President he signed, (this same year, 1657), the letter from the Colony of Rhode Island, in reply to the request of Massachusetts that the Quakers be removed and prevented from coming into the Colony, in which letter it was stated, "we have no law among us whereby to punish any for only declaring by words their minds and understandings concerning the things and ways of God as to salvation and an eternal condition."

In 1659 Arnold was appointed as the representative of Newport to purchase the lands of Ninecraft so as to open the territory for settlement, and later he was in Providence, together with Thomas Willett of Plymouth, appointed to settle the claims of Plymouth to Hog Island in Narragansett Bay, and the right of Rhode Island to the land in dispute was sustained.

He was one of the committee of four to draw an answer to the letters received from Plymouth and also served on the committee of eight appointed at the same session of the Court of Commissioners held at Portsmouth on the 23rd of August, 1659, to draft three letters, one to the Commissioners of the United Colonies, one to the General Court of Massachusetts, and one to Major Atherton and those joined with him, all concerning several purchases of land made in the Colony of Rhode Island by several from Massachusetts and others, contrary to law. At the General Election held in Portsmouth the last day of May, 1660, Arnold's place as President was filled by William Brenton, but he was chosen as Assistant for Newport, and he also served as Commissioner for Providence. At this General Court he was appointed one of a committee with William Harris, John Greene, Randall Holden and others, "to ripen the matter concerning the purchase made by the Gentlemen of the Bay (Mass.) in Narragansett and draw up their result thereon and present it to the Court." Arnold was one of the four persons appointed by the General Assembly to whom certain of the Sachems deeded, on the 28th of August, 1660, the tract of land known as Cowesett, for the benefit and use of the Colony.

At the session held in October, 1660, Arnold was appointed one of the committee "to treat with Major Atherton and those who had purchased lands in Narragansett, and if they could not come to any agreement, then to proceed against them and forbid their progress on the lands." At this same session Arnold was also one of a committee of three "to draw up a draught of a commission to be sent to Mr. John Clarke in England." The accession of Charles the Second seemed to render it necessary to confirm the position of Clarke as Agent for the Colony and desired the King to preserve the privileges and liberties contained in their Patent. He was also in 1661 one of the committee for the town of Newport to receive contributions to the amount of £200 for the agents in England. In this year Arnold was chosen Assistant for Newport, and as usual was active in the business of the session. At the General Court of Elections held at Warwick on the 22nd of May, 1662, he was again chosen President of the Colony, over William Brenton, and

was still retained as one of the Commissioners for Newport, and he succeeded himself in both these offices at the General Election of the following year.

On the 8th of July, 1663, the charter, for which John Clarke had spent so many years in England to obtain, was granted and, to quote from the records, "at a very great meeting and assembly of the freemen of the Colony," held in Newport, "legally called and orderly mett," on the 24th of November, for the sollome reception of His Majesty's gracious letters patent." Benedict Arnold was chosen Moderator and the letter of Mr. John Clarke to the President, Assistants and freemen of the Colony was read and the box in which the Charter was enclosed was opened and the instrument read by Captain George Baxter, and then held up on high and shewn to the people. The chair in which Arnold is said to have sat at this ceremony, though somewhat dilapidated, is still in existence and now in the possession of our Society.

In the Charter Arnold was named and appointed Governor and William Brenton Deputy Governor of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations; the thanks of the Colony were ordered to be "presented and returned by the Governor and Deputy Governor, in behalf of the whole Colony, to King Charles, for his inestimable and incomparable grace and favor in granting his gracious Letters Patent."

Under the instrument the governing body was changed from the Court of Commissioners to the Assistants and Deputies, and the Governor was made the presiding officer. One of the first acts of Arnold as Governor was, in conjunction with William Brenton, to address a letter to Governor Winthrop of Connecticut relative to running a line between the two colonies, as provided by the Charter, the occasion being the outrages committed at Southertown by some of the citizens of Connecticut.

At the first General Election held under the Charter, in May, 1664, Arnold was chosen Governor. Edmond Calverly of Warwick made some verbal charges against him, in regard to his alleged mal-administration, which charges were afterwards reduced to writing, but as Calverly was not able to make proof of the matters charged, Arnold was, at a subsequent session fully acquitted by the Assembly.

On March 20th, 1664, Arnold was appointed by the King's Commissioners, who came to Rhode Island to settle the claims of jurisdiction over the Narragansett country, one of the justices of the peace, and a magistrate of the so-called King's Province.

In May, 1665, Arnold was again elected Governor, but at the General Elections in 1666, he retired from office and was succeeded by William Brenton, but it was ordered by the Assembly that the General Sergeant be sent unto Mr. Benedict Arnold and some others, it being by law their liberty to sit and act in this Assembly as deputies, as the Court due desire their assistance."

In 1669, Arnold was again chosen Governor, and also in 1670, and it was during this year that the controversy with Connecticut over the disputed lands in the King's Province, and also in the neighborhood of what is now Westerly, became more acute; the Governor insisting upon the Colony's rights to them under the Charter, and asserted the intention of Rhode Island to perform its duties to God and the King; on the 11th of July, 1670, Arnold sent a strong letter to Gov. Winthrop upon the subject, informing him of the determination of the Assembly to appeal to King Charles, and at the June session of that body, Arnold was nominated and chosen Agent for the Colony to go to England "in order," to quote the records, "to vindicate the Charter before His Majesty and redeem the same from the injurious violations thereof by the Colony of Connecticut in their late invasions and intrusions upon the lands and government of this Colony." But neither Arnold nor either of the others appointed to go in his stead, should he be unable to accept the position, ever went on this mission.

During these last years the religious tenets of George Fox had been increasing among the inhabitants of the Colonies. The missionaries of the new sect found in Rhode Island under religious toleration, a fertile field for their labors, and it was also a harbor of refuge for the persecuted Quakers from Massachusetts and other colonies. As usual in that century, a prosperous sect became a political party, and although Arnold succeeded himself as Governor in 1671, yet at the election in May, 1672, the adherents of Fox acquired the ascendancy, and he was superseded by Nicho-

las Easton and for the next four years this new party controlled the office of the Chief Executive. I have thus far dwelt upon the public services of Arnold to the extent, perhaps, of being somewhat tedious, but it seemed advisable to show how much his usefulness had been in demand and his deep interest in all matters pertaining to the welfare of the Colony.

While we have reviewed the successful political career of Arnold, in his agricultural pursuits, which had been steadily followed, and as a merchant and trader he had been no less prosperous. Soon after his removal to Pawtuxet he became agent for arms, ammunition and liquors. He had early established himself on the Warwick side of the Pawtuxet River with Boston goods, provisions and such other stock as the times demanded. Gorton complains of him in his book, "Simplicities Defense," as constantly trading with the Indians on the Sabbath day, being a factor "for them of the Massachusetts," as he expresses it, "being supplied with commodity from them, having toleration to sell powder to the natives." And Gorton's further source of grievance was that Arnold was not allowed to sell to any of his settlers unless they submitted themselves to the jurisdiction of the Bay (Mass.). Gorton accused Arnold of being too broad in his views of keeping the Sabbath, and it seems to be true that Sunday was a great business day. The Indians gathered from the country around about with skins of beaver and otter and Arnold at his trading post was ready to deal in hardware, gun flints and other articles of Indian barter. "Fire water" was evidently not wanting, and he was accused by Warwick of furnishing the Indians with strong drink and wine, which was forbidden by the town orders. It is said he gave the Indians his counsel, together with his goods, and by "speaking his mind freely," he became to be recognized by them as a great Sachem long before he became Governor. For the next years after 1772, and during the so-called "Quaker regime," I do not find the name of Benedict Arnold upon the records of the Assembly, and he must have had more time to attend to his business interests. He is said to have been the wealthiest man in the Colony and besides his land and trading post, the allusion in his will to his warehouse and wharf is an additional evidence of his commercial

interests. Since 1650 commerce at Newport had been increasing, and trade with the West Indies, and especially with the Barbadoes, had been steadily growing. A letter in my possession, written on the 31st day of August, 1674, to his son-in-law, Roger Goulding, whom he affectionately addresses as "my very loving son," and who was at ~~one~~ time in Boston, *that* urges his finishing his (Arnold's) business at Barbadoes, and getting in any outstanding debts there, with instructions as to how they should be sent, and he also adds, "See if any consideration may be had for yt nasty parcell of molasses which was put upon you for my account." He tells him to return as soon as possible, so as to attend to his affairs here which would suffer by his absence: he commends him to the grace and protection of the Lord, and signs himself Your loving Father, Benedict Arnold.* But as the troubles with the Indians commenced and the Indian war was being waged, Arnold's advice and counsel were sought for, and on April 4th, 1676, it was voted by the Assembly "that in these troublesome times and straits in this Colony, the Assembly desiring the advice and concurrence of the most judicious inhabitants for the good of the whole, if it may be had, due desire at their next sitting the company and counsel of Mr. Benedict Arnold."

The breaking out of what is known as King Philip's War was naturally not conducive to the continuance of the peaceful methods of the Quakers. The Island, it is true, had not been threatened by the Indians, but on the mainland, and especially at Providence, which was burned and sacked, the losses from the outrages of the natives had been severe and it has been intimated that Providence might have been saved, had it not been left to its fate by Newport. It is not surprising, therefore, that, in considering these conditions, the need of a stronger government was felt and it was but natural, in view of the apprehended dangers, the people should turn to Arnold, whose force of will made him a power in the Colony in dealing with the Indians. Accordingly at the General Court of Elections held on the 2nd of May, 1677, the so-called "war party" was successful, a triumph over the Quakers, and Arnold was again elected Governor, over Walter Clarke, the then incumbent.

*A *fac simile* of this letter is printed on the following page.

Received August 31: 1624-[#]

30. *Agave* *serotina* *Mill.*

[illegible]

207. *Erismia flathii*
Arundiniflora *Erismia*

Amidic-Henderson

For my very loving Son - Mr. Regier
Gardner - Phila at Boston
Dearest ~

Sending this to Boston
to be put

Trispart

2 m. Paradise wing

2:4:00

The career of Arnold, however, was being brought to a close; his race was nearly run. His health began to fail before the end of his term, and, although ill, such was his hold upon the affections of the people that at the Election in May, 1678, he was re-elected and as he could not leave his house, the Deputy Governor, Major John Cranston, two of the Assistants and the Recorder were empowered to go to him and receive his engagement. His health did not improve, he lingered until the 19th of June, when he passed away, in the sixty-fourth year of his age. He desired by his will that he should be buried in the "parcel of land containing three rods square on or near the line or path from my dwelling house leading to my stone built windmill in ye town of Newport." In the center of the plat was a tomb already erected over the grave of his grandchild, Damaris Goulding, buried there on the 14th of August, 1677. He wished to be interred at the east end of said tomb, himself on the north side and his wife on the south side of him. He further provided in his will that the lot should forever be preserved for his kindred, and that they be buried as they died at convenient distances about his grave. Fortunately his will has been preserved. It was copied from the Town Council Book in 1752 and thus escaped the destruction of the Town Records which were carried off by the British in 1779, and lost in Hell Gate. Many of these records were afterward recovered, but in a mutilated condition. The copy of Arnold's will came later into the hands of David Melville, one of Newport's antiquarians of the last century; the will is a long one, well drawn, and clearly expressed, and covers, with the codicil, more than ten 12mo. pages of closely set type. It is dated December 24th, 1677.

It seems somewhat singular that one of the three witnesses to it was Edmund Calverly, undoubtedly the same who preferred charges against Arnold to the Assembly in 1664.

Thus died one of the most prominent of the early settlers of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. As among the active men of the times he takes rank with Williams, Coddington, Clarke, and Gorton, in furthering the civil and political concerns of the Colony. He was zealous in procuring the re-union of the four towns after the annulling

of Coddington's commission and, as has been mentioned, was sent by the town of Newport, after his removal to that place, and even before he had been formally made a freeman, to the mainland towns, urging the reunion, and his former residence at Providence and his familiarity with the people of Warwick rendered him especially fitted for that service. While he was not the equal of Williams and Clarke in scholarly attainments, he exceeded them in general business knowledge, and as a man of daily affairs, and he seems to have had more than ordinary education for that time. He was a strong and vigorous character. His views were liberal and he was imbued with the Rhode Island idea of intellectual and religious freedom. His repeated elections to the highest office in the gift of the people shows his popularity and the confidence reposed in him by his constituents. The historian of Rhode Island, Samuel Greene Arnold, says of him, "Like Williams, he recognized the distinction between persecution and opposition, between legal force and moral suasion as applied to matters of opinion, and throughout his long and useful life, he displayed talents of a brilliant order, which were ever employed for his fellow men."

Arnold was married on the 17th day of December, 1640, to Damaris Westcott, daughter of Stukeley Westcott, one of the grantees of land at Providence, by whom he had nine children; eight were living at the time of his death. His wife survived him less than a year. Arnold was a large land owner. The editor of Book Notes, probably having in mind his attempts at Pawtuxet and Shawomet, says of him: "He was land hungry first, last and all the time, he wanted the earth." But it must be remembered that in those days land was the main source of investment, and the ideas of the early settlers were influenced by the large landed estates in the mother country.

Arnold had several parcels of land in and about Newport, one known as the "Leamington Farm." He was concerned in the purchase of Conanicut Island and Dutch Island, with William Coddington and others, which they bought from the Indians on the 17th day of April, 1657. On the 22d of May following he, with John Greene, acquired from the Sachem Cachanaquant Goat Island and Coasters'

Harbor Island, but these later became the property of the town, as is shown by the subsequent deed of Greene to Arnold, and Arnold to the town of Newport in 1673. On June 29th, 1660, a company of Newport men, including Arnold, purchased from Sosoia, a Pequot Captain among the Narragansetts, a tract of land lying near the Pawcatuck River called Misquamacock. In the middle of September of the following year, he with others, entered upon the lands and the drawing of the house lots No. 19 fell to Arnold. Peaceful possession, however, was not allowed by Massachusetts, who ordered the constable from the settlement at Southertown to arrest the newcomers. Two were carried to Boston and examined before the Court. Arnold, who had also been complained of for intruding within the bounds of Southertown*—"the blunt and energetic Arnold," as Updike calls him—as a loyal Rhode Islander, and bold in asserting the rights of the purchasers, answered that "they owned themselves to be the men who claimed the land and would not try their titles anywhere but in Rhode Island, or in England, and would never try the title in Boston."

Also in 1657, a company from Newport, and John Hull of Boston, had bought a large tract of land, several miles in extent, in the Narragansett country from the Sachems, known as the Pettiquamscutt purchase. Later William Brenton was admitted as a purchaser, and in June, 1668, Benedict Arnold also became a co-partner and entitled to one-seventh interest in the company. This he held at the time of his death, and it was bequeathed to three of his sons, Benedict, Josiah and Oliver, together with the interest in the cattle found there. Arnold's residence and business property consisted of two parcels divided by the principal street of the town, the parcel on the western side of the highway on which stood his warehouse and wharf, ran to the shore. On the other portion, on the eastern side, where was situated "his dwelling or mansion house," which he bequeathed to his wife during her life, included the land on Thames street, from a pathway or line which is now Mill street, thence

*Southertown was incorporated by Massachusetts Oct. 19th, 1658. It is now known as Stonington, Conn., this name having been later given to it by the Assembly of that Colony.

running southerly to a line where Green street now is, then running easterly parallel with Mill street, to a lane or road-way now known as Bellevue avenue. In his later years in the rear of this lot, overlooking the Bay, he built his mill with its graceful arches, in the style of that other stone wind-mill at Chesterton, in Warwickshire, with which, as a youth, he was undoubtedly familiar.† The house, which Arnold began building soon after he was well established at Newport, stood back 30 feet from the highway about on a line with that building which formerly contained the Peoples' Library. It was a substantial structure, and it is said had a stately fence in front of it, with tall images on the gate posts, a place in keeping with his means and his social and political prominence. His obsequies were largely attended. In a letter written soon after by one present it was stated that "all the Island was invited, many others were there, judged near a thousand people." The services were conducted by the Rev. William Hiscox of the Seventh Day Baptist Denomination, who, the account further says, "spoke there excellently led forth."

Arnold's grave is neglected. Even "the free egress and regress to and from ye said burying place, without any molestation from any that shall succeed me in ye land about it," as requested in his will, has oftentimes not been heeded, although at present I believe the way is open. His remains, although once removed, now lie in their first resting place; and it would seem as if a grateful State might, by some substantial outward mark, recall to posterity the name, memory and services of its first Charter Governor.

†Note—The Old Stone Mill and Governor Arnold is fully discussed in a paper read before this Society Nov. 20th, 1916, and printed in Bulletin No. 21 for January, 1917.



ARNOLD BURYING GROUND OFF PELHAM STREET

SOCIETY NOTES

At the risk of being accused of harping too much upon one string, we take pleasure in reminding our many friends and members of the usefulness of our Society as a place of meeting for the various organizations in which they are more or less interested. Prominent among such meetings this year are the following:

Friday, July 11, the annual meeting of the Red Cross, which was largely attended.

July 15, a Concert given by Mrs. W. A. Clarke, at which the meeting house and the hall were crowded with an enthusiastic audience. Mrs. Clarke, as well as the artists she had engaged, were loud in their praises of the rooms, laying especial stress upon the excellence of their acoustic properties.

August 7th Meeting of the General Nathaniel Greene Memorial Association. (The delegates from the Newport Historical Society to the General Nathaniel Greene Memorial Association are:

Alfred Tuckerman, term expires 1920.

Hamilton B. Tompkins, term expires 1921.

George P. Wetmore, term expires 1922.

Lawrence L. Gillespie, term expires 1923.

Roderick Terry, term expires 1924.)

On Wednesday, August 27, there was held a meeting of the Newport Medical Society, the first since the entry of the United States into the great World War. A rather comical incident in connection with this meeting is the fact that it was synchronous to the very hour with one held by another association whose tenets are as diametrically opposed to those of the disciples of Aesculapius as were those of the Huns and Allies. But even if arrangements had not been made to have the meetings take place, one at the north, the other at the south end of the building, we feel confident that the venerable dignity which permeates and clothes our rooms as with a

garment, would have averted the least manifestation of animosity.

Meetings of the Newport Improvement Association have been frequent and largely attended. It is a matter of distinct satisfaction to feel that many of the waves of beneficence that have borne comfort and cheer to remote corners of the earth have had their origin here. The value of practical means of communication was appreciated by the great peoples of thousands of years ago. The question of improvement of our roads has recently been discussed at the aforementioned meetings with both ardor and eloquence, and we have reason to believe that the highways and byways of our beloved Island of Rhode Island will ere long rival those of ancient Rome. Then let us who ride in our gasoline-driven chariots give thanks to the inspiration which gave impulse to Rhode Island Road Reformation, and remember that it was largely due to the atmosphere of sanctity and nobility pervading the beautiful halls in which the meetings were held.

The insertion of the "Dr. Johnson Window" in the wall of our "Directors' Room," must justly be considered one of the

most notable points in the record of this year's progress. It is the precious privilege of an Historical Society to recall the past, to tell the story of interesting and instructive events of long bygone years; and when the opportunity presents itself to listen to one of these stories at first hand, in other words, to permit an ancient landmark to speak for itself, the occasion becomes one of peculiar felicity.

In 1794 the so-called "Dr. Johnson Window" was part of the Charles Feke house on Washington Square. Feke's Bitters played at that time a prominent role among the popular remedies for ills of the flesh, and the mortar which stands on one of the shelves of the window today is the very same vessel in which some of the ingredients of that marvelous specific were pounded and compounded. In 1810 the window was placed in Dr. Johnson's apothecary shop in Thames street, a few doors north of Washington Square, and it remained there until 1861, so that many of us still today can remember having seen it there. Through the kindness of the late J. M. K. Southwick, one of the most devoted officers of our Society, the window came into our possession many years ago, and

was stored in the basement. It has now been brought up into the light of day and placed with tender hands where all visitors to our rooms may see and admire it as it justly deserves.

Referring to the interesting paper on Governor Arnold, printed in this number, we are glad to have succeeded in obtaining the illustration representing the grave of the First Governor as it appeared a few years ago.

Visitors to our Newspaper Room are constantly increasing in number. The facilities for reference to incidents recorded in the long past or the living present, are becoming widely recognized.

The Society has recently received a valuable addition to its collection of relics of the Battle of Lake Erie. The sword

of William V. Taylor, who was Commodore Perry's sailing master on board of the *Lawrence* during the engagement, has been presented to the City of Newport by his descendants, with the request that it be deposited with the Newport Historical Society. This sword was awarded to Capt. Taylor in recognition of his gallantry, by Congress, by Resolution of January 6, 1814. It is now on exhibition in our main exhibition hall, together with our other relics of the famous engagement, and around and above it are grouped several commissions held by Admiral William Rogers Taylor, son of Captain William V. Taylor, bearing the signatures of Presidents of the United States, beginning with Andrew Jackson and ending with Ulysses S. Grant. These commissions are a part of the Taylor bequest.

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